

# Bike and Personal Safety

## Riding Gear

When most people hear the term "riding gear", they think of things that will lessen injury in case of a fall. While that is a big part of it, riding gear can and should be used to help keep you from falling in the first place. Never thought about it that way? If not, you're certainly not alone. Proper riding gear is used to maintain comfort as well as provide crash protection. Discomfort can actually CAUSE a fall.

So what is proper riding gear? It depends on the conditions, but at minimum it is:

- **A helmet approved by DOT.** The helmet should fit snug but not be too tight. In other words, it should be comfortable. Besides being the best defense against *head injury* in case of a fall, a helmet has some other advantages as well.
- **A long-sleeved shirt or jacket,** snug at the wrists.
- **Long pants.**
- **Full-fingered gloves.** Besides abrasion protection, gloves usually offer a better grip on the controls, especially in condition extremes. In the cold, you will need them to stay warm. In the heat, sweaty hands or fingers may slip off the controls. Gloves offer a buffer against this. They also provide some level of protection against flying objects, such as rocks picked up by traffic or insects that inevitably will collide with your hands.
- **Eye protection.** This may be goggles, a face-shield, or glasses. Windshields attached to motorcycles DO NOT offer adequate eye protection.
- **Sturdy footwear.** Preferably leather and preferably over the ankle. Besides the obvious abrasion protection, on most motorcycles there are many hot parts that reside near your feet and ankles. You should also try to avoid long or dangling laces. Your quick thinking may be put to the test if you come to a stop and your foot won't go down because you have a lace caught in the shifter or brake pedal.

## Making Sure Your Motorcycle Is Ready

You being ready to ride is only part of the battle. You need to make sure your motorcycle is ready too. You should perform a quick, overall inspection of your motorcycle before each ride. To do this, use what is referred to as the T-CLOCK inspection, explained below.

### **T – Tires and wheels:**

Check your tires for proper air pressure tread depth, cracks and bulges or embedded objects. Check wheels for dents, cracks and roundness. Check spokes for proper tightness or missing spokes. Check bearings and seals for signs of failure.

### **C – Controls:**

Check all levers, making sure they are not broken, bent, cracked or loose. Check the condition and routing of control cables, making sure they move freely, are not frayed, and have no sharp angles, and are of sufficient length as to not interfere with steering. Check that all hoses are in good condition and don't interfere with steering. Make sure your throttle moves freely, with no sticking and snaps closed when released.

### **L – Lights and electrical:**

Check your battery, making sure the terminals are clean, electrolyte fluid is sufficient, and that it is properly secured. Check your headlight, making sure it works, has no cracks and is aimed properly. Check all other lights and reflectors for operation, cracks and fastening. Check wiring, looking for frays, clean connections and proper routing.

### **O – Oil and fluids:**

Check oil and fluid levels, including brake and clutch fluid, coolant and of course gasoline. Check all fluid reservoirs, hoses and lines for leaks.

### **C – Chassis:**

Check condition of the frame, looking for cracks, dents or bends. Check forks and shocks, making sure they travel freely and are properly adjusted. Check chain or belt, for proper tension, lubrication and wear. Check all fasteners, bolts and cotter pins, making sure they are not missing, broken or loose.

### **K – Kickstand:**

Check the side stand and center stand. Make sure they are not cracked or bent, and that they spring into place and the tension is sufficient to hold them. Although this sounds like a lot, this inspection can be performed quite quickly. While it won't guarantee against a failure of some sort, it increases your odds of finding problems before they become dangerous or fatal.